

## Baird Scores Important Victories for Southwest Washington in FY09 House Budget Resolution (March 5, 2008)

Washington, D.C. - In a time when Americans are struggling to balance their budgets, feed their families, and pay skyrocketing energy and healthcare bills, the House Budget Committee today unveiled its FY09 Budget that focuses on meeting the greatest needs of Americans while balancing the nation's budget and strengthening the economy.

As a member of the Budget Committee, Congressman Brian Baird (WA-03) joined Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) in revealing major priorities in the FY09 Budget that will provide tax relief for millions of American families, increase funding for efficient and renewable energy programs, and include robust defense funding to keep America safe.

"As a member of the House Budget Committee, I am proud of the FY09 Budget Resolution and the vital investments it makes in sales tax deduction, math and science education initiatives, and the U.S. Forest Service, among other important interests of residents in Southwest Washington," said Congressman Baird. "The Houses' Budget plan not only balances the budget in five years, but also funds important priorities that will meet the needs of many Americans. I look forward to working with members on both sides of the aisle to pass a budget that will help Americans struggling to make ends meet and invest in a stronger economy."

Rep. Baird was instrumental in securing major victories for Southwest Washington in the FY09 House Budget Resolution:

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Extension of Sales Tax Deduction. Rep. Baird was successful in securing an extension of the sales tax deduction in the House Budget that will provide tax relief for millions of taxpayers, including residents in Southwest Washington.

"Since entering Congress, I have advocated for sales tax deduction for the state of Washington," said Congressman Baird. "I was disappointed when the President's FY 09 Budget Proposal did not include an extension of the sales tax deduction; thereby creating a heavy burden for many hardworking Washington taxpayers who would see their federal income taxes increase. As a champion of sales tax deductibility, I am pleased the House includes this extension that is critical to helping millions of middle class Americans and Washingtonians save money."

#### - Secure

Rural Schools. Rep. Baird helped secure vital funding for the Secure Rural Schools Program, while pushing for the reauthorization of the program. The President's FY09 budget vastly underfunded this important program and did not provide for the program's long-term reauthorization. The Secure Rural Schools program, passed in 2000 with Congressman Baird's support, allows counties to receive federal financial assistance based on the average of the top three annual revenues they received from timber harvest on federal lands from 1985 to 1999. More than 4,400 rural schools and 700 counties nationwide have benefited from the law.

#### "Rural

counties in Southwest Washington depend on Secure Rural Schools funding to maintain important public infrastructure, education, and safety programs," said Congressman Baird, who represents Skamania and Lewis Counties - the two Washington counties receiving the highest levels of Secure Rural Schools funding. "I am pleased that the House Budget makes the Secure Rural Schools Program a priority and reauthorizes this program that is critical to helping schools improve classrooms and roads."

#### &bull; Law Enforcement

Funding to Fight Meth. Rep. Baird helped secure funding for the Byrne JAG program and the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) program in the House Budget. The President's FY09 budget proposed to eliminate these two programs. The House Budget restores funding for these programs that help local law enforcement officials fight methamphetamine in Southwest Washington and across America.

#### "The

House Budget proposal invests in our local law enforcement and methamphetamine initiatives," said Congressman Baird. "The Byrne JAG and COPS programs are both essential to bolstering law enforcement, corrections, and drug treatment programs. As co-founder of Congressional Caucus to Control and Fight Methamphetamine, it is imperative that local law enforcement officials have the funding, resources, and tools required to fight meth domestically and internationally."

#### - Math and

Science Education Initiatives. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, Rep. Baird fought to include funding for programs under the America COMPETES Act, bipartisan legislation that passed last year in order to ensure our competitiveness in the global economy.

#### "While the

President's Budget failed to fully fund the America COMPETES Act, our

Budget provides sufficient funding under the COMPETES Act to educate new scientists, engineers, and mathematicians and place more highly-qualified teachers in math and science classrooms," said Congressman Baird.

- Career and Technical Education loans. As co-founder of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, Rep. Baird was instrumental in securing funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Program.

"As a co-founder of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, I have diligently worked to ensure that students, educators, administrators and the general public understand the importance of improving CTE programs to invest in a competitive global economy," said Rep. Baird. "I was disappointed in the President's decision to not include funding for Perkins Career and Technical Education grants in his budget and I commend the House Budget Committee for rejecting this decision. The Perkins Career and Technical Education program provides critical help to schools providing career and technical educational opportunities to their students and I am pleased to see this strong investment."

- Forest Service Funding. Rep. Baird supported an increase in funding for the U.S. Forest Service that was included in the FY09 House Budget.

"I am pleased that the House Budget rejects the President's decision to cut funding for the U.S. Forest Service and instead increases funding that will help maintain America's vast forests," said Rep. Baird.

- National Park Service. Rep. Baird helped secure critical funding for the National Park Service and worked to include a provision allowing for passage of legislation to implement the National Park Centennial Initiative.

"As co-founder of the Congressional National Parks Caucus, I was pleased that the President's proposal included an increase in funding for the annual operating needs of our national parks," said Congressman Baird. "However, the President's Budget failed to fully fund some areas that are vital to sustaining our cherished national parks. The Houses' Budget provides the necessary funding to help take care of our national parks while making way for the passage of legislation creating the Centennial Initiative."

• Mental Health Parity. As a former health care professional, Rep. Baird has been strongly supportive of efforts relating to mental health parity. Rep. Baird was

a strong advocate of securing language in the House Budget to allow for the enactment of a mental health parity bill. Today, the House of Representatives passed The Paul Wellstone Mental Healthy and Addiction Equity Act of 2007, (H.R. 1424), of which Rep. Baird is an original cosponsor and leading advocate.

"As a clinical psychologist, it is clear to me that the need for mental health equity is unquestionable," said Rep. Baird. "Everyone has a family member, friend or co-worker who has been affected by mental illness. That is why it is imperative that Congress pass legislation that leads to mental health parity. The House Budget presented today takes into account that we may work toward that goal, and pass legislation that will make sure that no American is discriminated against because of a mental illness."

Today, the House and Senate Budget Committee's unveiled their FY09 Budget Resolutions. Both bills will go to the floor next week for consideration.

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